

Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento, California

FLORIN JAPANESE-AMERICAN CITIZEN LEAGUE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

MATSUYE YOKOI

NOVEMBER 12, 1990
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Interviewed by Marion Kanemoto



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

FLORIN CHAPTER • PO Box • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95829-2634

PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

Marion Kanemoto, retired school nurse from the Elk Grove Unified School District, Elk Grove, California and a member of the Florin Japanese American Citizens League.

EDITOR

Elizabeth Pinkerton, October 1992

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

November 12, 1990
Home of Tom and Mary Yokoi
9970 Old Placerville Road
Sacramento, CA 95827

TRANSCRIBING, TRANSLATING AND TYPING

The interview was conducted in Japanese. Pat Namba translated the Japanese tape recording to English. Son, Fred Yokoi, edited the translated material with corrections on a few facts in July of 1992. Typing was done by Shirley Kubo.

TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORDS

Copies of the bound transcript and the tape will be kept by Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives at The Library, California State University, Sacramento, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Matsuye Yokoi is a very slight, modest and humble woman born on May 18, 1899 in Aiichi Ken, Japan. Her father, Shikijiro Fukuta, lost his wealth in Japan, so he came to the United States to regain his fortune.

Matsuye accompanied her farmer husband in 1918 to farm in the Walnut Grove area with three other relatives. They then moved to the Mayhew area to farm strawberries, grapes and fruits on leased land.

Matsuye was formally educated in Japan until she was 13 years old. From the age of 8 to 13 she had extensive training in Buddhism and his teachings. She had special training in sewing and in abacus which required special skills. She was the oldest and was expected to carry on the family name and was given a sense of filial duty.

Her camp experience was at Fresno Assembly Center and Poston II for three years during the World War II years. Good Caucasian friends took care of their Mayhew home and farm but no rent was paid to them during this entire time. Heavy farm equipment which was stored outside was used and damaged.

Mrs. Yokoi humbly admits to her memory slipping and is a bit frustrated trying to recall the past, but her religion sustains her at age 91. She proudly announces her weekly attendance to the Betsuin Buddhist church some 18 miles away in Sacramento. She appreciates her daughter-in-law, Mary, who provides this transportation to her most important mission in life. Her husband passed away eight years ago. She credits him for having foresight in what he left for the family.

Matsuye Yokoi raised six successful children, two of whom served in the United States Army during WWII. Today she has 18 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. She was one of the first Isseis to receive the redress check and the official national apology in October of 1990.

Taken at her home at 9970 Placerville Road, Sacramento, California. Her birthday is May 18, 1900, and she was born in Aichi Ken.

The interviewer is Marion Kanemoto, and this oral history was taken on November 12, 1990. Also in presence is Etsuko Yui.

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, where were you born?

Yokoi: Aichi-ken, Umibe-gun, Hachikai-mura, Oazashimo, Omachi.

Kanemoto: Ah, Yes. Shitamachi. What were the names of your parents?

Yokoi: Fukuta, Tatsu. Fukuta, Shikejiro.

Kanemoto: Brothers and sisters. How many?

Yokoi: Siblings, brother and another brother; there are four of us now. Two of us came, and two passed away.

Kanemoto: Two of you came to America?

Yokoi: No, only one, just me.

Kanemoto: Oh, only one?

Yokoi: But the other one who was here recently came back from Japan. He is a cousin. His name is Ishizuka from the Delta area.

Kanemoto: So the siblings would be the two younger brothers?

Yokoi: Yes. Two younger brothers.

Kanemoto: Do you have any older brother or sister?

Yokoi: I don't have any.

Kanemoto: So only three. There are only three children?

Yokoi: Yes, because the others passed away.

Kanemoto: But previously? Only three?

Yokoi: No. The ones still living are myself and Harue. Only the two of us. The other two passed away. Two of us are here.

Kanemoto: Two of you are here in America?

Yokoi: No, no, no. We are still living.

Kanemoto: Two of you are still alive. Is she (your sister) still in Aichi-ken?

Yokoi: Yes. Since I married into the family my name is Yokoi but, my maiden name is Fukuta.

Kanemoto: Fukuta? Then from the Fukuta family you were the only one who came to America?

Yokoi: But my father was here before.

Kanemoto: Is that so? Then he was knowledgeable about America.

Yokoi: I really don't know. I don't know anything about it because they never told me anything.

Kanemoto: What did your father do while he was in America?

Yokoi: That is ancient history--I was about what age? After he came to America, after how

many years did he return to Japan? (Lapse of memory)

Kanemoto: What year did he come to America?

Yokoi: 1900. I was born in 1900. I came here at age nineteen.

Kanemoto: And your father?

Yokoi: He came here before that. After I had been conceived he then came to America. My family, for some unknown reason lost the (shinsho) family fortune and property. I understood they had a substantial amount, but for some unknown reason, they lost it all.

Kanemoto: What is shinsho?

Yokoi: Property. Fortune. Don't know why, but they lost it.

Kanemoto: In Japan?

Yokoi: Yes. My father's family was well to do. My mother's side was also well to do, but lost it. In order to recoup the lost fortune, my father came to America.

Kanemoto: Where did he go, to the Florin area? Did he farm there?

Yokoi: Yes, he bought forty acres in Taishoku. He was in the Kawashimo area; Walnut Grove in

the Delta area. He was farming extensively.
With four relatives together they farmed.

Kanemoto: This is your own father?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Then he returned to Japan?

Yokoi: Yes. After I came, how many years after was it? I was with third child, or was it the fourth child? I gave birth continuously. I am amazed that I had so many. I have a small body, but I sure had a lot of children. Because of the number of children I went through many hardships through the years. We didn't suffer for lack of money. The children were the source of hardship.

Kanemoto: Yes, yes.

Yokoi: But the eldest daughter, because she was a girl, she always watched what I did, and if she got in the way I told her to go away. Even when she was small, she helped me with everything. Even when I told her she was in the way, she insisted on helping. That child is in Sacramento, the oldest daughter.

Kanemoto: Your oldest daughter?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: We will go back to your childhood days.

Your education--in Japan, to what grade did you attend school?

Yokoi: The sixth grade was the top grade. Before that the fourth grade was the end. I went to the sixth grade. Our home wasn't that poor. We had helpers and mother worked hard. At age thirteen Mother asked me if I would help. I felt sorry for Mother so I went to the sixth grade, and then helped on the family farm.

Kanemoto: So you did attend up to the sixth grade and then helped on the family farm.

Yokoi: I also went to the sewing school. After finishing the sixth grade, I immediately entered the sewing school. I went to Nagoya because there is none in the country. Nagoya is a place where they sell things, and that is also what my family did. That is why this farmer went to Nagoya and although I didn't go to school, I studied the abacus and chanting the sutra because I was asked to learn them well.

Kanemoto: What is okyosama?

Yokoi: Okyosama. I am a Buddhist, and I can understand everything the Reverend says. I

learned everything in the book when I was eight years old. My brother was six years old. We went for three months every night.

Kanemoto: So that is the study of Buddha and his teachings?

Yokoi: Yes, the study of Buddha.

Kanemoto: Then by the age of eight, you understood quite a bit?

Yokoi: Yes. I could chant the sutras by memory. I was taught at the age of eight until the age of thirteen. Or it was age fourteen when I finished sixth grade. Hyakubacho is a place where people meet (jinmin) so it is noisy. If your family does not furnish it, there is no other family who can, so unless you do, we will be in trouble. We were scolded, but mother said I was weak, and so was father, so was the older sister. I could do a little to help so we would like some help. They did not try to send me to school. Unless they sent to school, no one will come to this village. They scolded. But even though scolded, mother said "so sorry" and turned them down. My younger sister went. She was nine years younger.

I was the most worthless one of all.

Kanemoto: The older child makes the sacrifices, doesn't she?

Yokoi: Yes. The most worthless one. You have to suffer.

Kanemoto: You had to be your mother's best helper. And you helped save the farm, didn't you?

Yokoi: I didn't do too much farming, but yes, I did. It is the country. There are lots of fields. After that, what did happen? My husband also had lots of fields and we also had our own. For some reason, we could get the property for free. This side of Azo. During our time it was very expensive. That is why even ittan or handan, mother said she wanted to regain the ownership of the property so she worked very hard to accomplish that. Father was a yoshi. That is why they had to teach the older daughter, myself, everything, because I had a younger sister. Otherwise, what would become of the younger sister. My father said it can't be helped because you are the older. That is why I helped since there was no other way. I did help. I was the most obedient and

showed filial duty in Japan.

Kanemoto: Up to age nineteen?

Yokoi: Yes, at age nineteen I came to America in November.

Kanemoto: Then how did the marriage arrangement with Mr. Yokoi come about?

Yokoi: When I was age nineteen I disliked "boyfriend". (Chuckles) It sounds funny, but I really disliked boys. That is the reason when the young men came to call, I would say "Excuse me" and run away. I did not like them. I was afraid of boys. I felt I was worthless and insignificant (tsumaranai) but at the same time felt all boys were alike and there was nothing to fear, but I still felt afraid. There was no reason--just no good. I was stupid.

Kanemoto: Yokoi-san returned from America to get his bride?

Yokoi: Yes. His father came to America when he was a child. When he was age sixteen he came back to Japan to get a bride. She was the same age as I was. We were to live together. She was from a very good family. I was amazed that the parents of such a good

family would let her go. After we came here, we were together for six months. And then, influenza hit us. It was very severe. She went to the doctor. She had a child. How do you say it --Sacramento had a pharmacist--I forgot--this is an incident of over sixty years ago.

Kanemoto: She died from influenza?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Did the child survive?

Yokoi: No. A month or a month-and-a-half later, she passed away.

Kanemoto: Then they had no other children?

Yokoi: No, they did not. That is why my mother said, "If you have a child, I cannot give my daughter to you. But, since you say you have no child, that is why I will give you my precious daughter." The mother from the other side came to inquire. That is how the marriage proposal was completed at that time.

Kanemoto: Then it was not a picture-bride situation?

Yokoi: No, no, no.

Kanemoto: So then, you came to America together?

Yokoi: Yes. My husband came when he was age

fourteen or fifteen at the request or call from his father. When he was age twenty-three, he went home because his wife had passed away. That is when I came.

Kanemoto: Did you come by way of Seattle?

Yokoi: No, San Francisco. I have never been to Seattle.

Kanemoto: Did you come directly to Florin?

Yokoi: I was never in Florin. It is a place called Mayhew.

Kanemoto: Mayhew. You came directly to Mayhew?

Yokoi: After I came directly to Mayhew, the employers for the group said all the work is finished so separate and wait. The group had dispersed. There is a place called Oak Park, south of Sacramento. There was my husband's father's daughter who lived there. I stayed with them for one month. After we came here, there were no relatives, so my husband was amazed. It wasn't supposed to be this way, he said. He finished his job and returned home to get me. That is why he did not work steadily. There were jobs but he came home to get me. That is why he couldn't do anything so we returned

immediately to Sacramento. There was a place called Rishukan in Sacramento.

Kanemoto: What is Rishukan?

Yokoi: Rishukan is the name of the hotel. The operator was Mr. Suzuki. We went there and were so happy to be there. Mr. Suzuki was happy to have us there, too. Said we had done well, too. How good that you had come. At that time he was still single. After that he got married and we used to meet at church.

Kanemoto: What did your husband raise on his farm?

Yokoi: Not here. It was not here.

Kanemoto: Mayhew?

Yokoi: No, no, no. This is Mayhew, but previously he was in Florin. A place called Taishoku which is near Florin. He had forty acres there with his father and uncle, the three of them brought and farmed there.

Kanemoto: This was the Yokoi family?

Yokoi: Yes. They were all Yokoi.

Kanemoto: What kind of farm did they have?

Yokoi: They did that, and he was the only help since he was still single at that time. So he parted from them and came to a place

called Mayhew to a Caucasian's place and leased the place for ten years. So my husband came to help there. Everyone suffered. I did not suffer, but they worked here, and there, and suffered and went through many hardships. So when we get together at church and talk, they said there is no one as fortunate as you. I was fortunate. I never had to worry about money or anything else. I never experienced hardships. But, there were so many children I was embarrassed. (Heiko)?

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, how many children do you have?

Yokoi: There were seven. There was a little one who passed away at the age of one year and one month. There are six children now.

Kanemoto: Six children. What are their names?

Yokoi: Yoshiko, Meriko, Yoneko, she is far away; then there is one in Walnut Grove who is the oldest son. I forget the names of my own children with this head.

Kanemoto: That's all right. If you think hard, you will remember.

Yokoi: Curtis, no Curtis is the grandson. I can't remember. I have thirteen great

grandchildren.

Kanemoto: Great grandchildren?

Yokoi: There are eighteen grandchildren. Thirteen great grandchildren. There are many.

Kanemoto: What is the name of your youngest child?

Yokoi: Fred.

Kanemoto: Fred. Okay, what is the name of the one next to him? Who is older than Fred?

Yokoi: Tom. Tom Yokoi.

Kanemoto: Tom. Okay. And who is above Tom?

Yokoi: Roy Yokoi.

Kanemoto: Roy. Okay. All right. Then this is complete now. Yoshiko, Meriko, Yoneko, Roy, Tom and Fred.

Yokoi: Yes. Six children. I won't mention the one who passed away.

Kanemoto: Yes, okay.

Yokoi: She passed away after five months and half year. ... in a dream. It has been over sixty years since she passed away.

Kanemoto: She is a Buddha now, isn't she? You have eighteen grandchildren, thirteen great grandchildren. Right? What a wonderful household.

Yokoi: It was very difficult.

Kanemoto: You may have had hardships, but you had lots of joy and happiness, too.

Yokoi: We did have hardships because of the children. Other than that, we have no hardship. To keep the children from getting into mischief, I had to keep watching and be with them constantly, that wore me out. Farming itself was not a hardship. The children were the source of hardship. There were too many of them. I had a baby every year, even with this small body. I became very thin. I tried to put on a skirt to go to church, and it was very loose.

Kanemoto: You lost weight, didn't you?

Yokoi: Lost weight? You better believe it. I was never so thin before. Nothing but bones. There was a little meat before. But at this time, there was nothing but bone. But it wasn't from lack of eating.

Kanemoto: Did you have a good appetite?

Yokoi: Yes. I ate a bowl full of rice, and ate the okazu (dish to be eaten with rice) whatever amount my daughter-in-law offered me. I always accepted it.

Kanemoto: Was it delicious?

Yokoi: Yes. It was very tasty. I did not catch cold for the last two to three years. But this head. I have high blood pressure.

Kanemoto: I have a history of high blood pressure so I have been taking medication for twenty years. About three or four years ago, a specialist said not to take any more. He said it might go too low so I haven't taken medicine for three years. But recently, last year, it began to go up again so he said to take the medicine again. Don't forget to take it in the mornings, the doctor said. So I am taking medication again.

Kanemoto: Okay. Just the high blood pressure medication. Do you have any other problems?

Yokoi: No, nothing. Just vitamins, high blood pressure medicine and Anacin. Anacin does not have negative effects on the body. Even as medicine, it does not have negative effect even taken with other medication. That is why I always take it in the morning.

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, while you were raising your large family, did you do anything for your enjoyment? For instance, the women's group

at church or something like that. Were you involved with anything like that?

Yokoi: I was stupid. I had no time so I did not attend. There were so many children rattling around I could not go. (Even there were two of us) I am grateful, and I always went to church every Sunday.

Kanemoto: So you went to church.

Yokoi: For forty-one years, every Sunday I attended church.

Kanemoto: Which church was it?

Yokoi: Sacramento Betsuin.

Kanemoto: You went up there on Sundays?

Yokoi: Yes. My daughter-in-law takes me. Fortunately, even though my son sleeps in, my daughter-in-law takes me. Her name is Mary.

Kanemoto: How fortunate you are.

Yokoi: I am very grateful. (Ogande imasu) I am grateful from my heart.

Kanemoto: That is wonderful. Other than the church, do you have any other enjoyment besides the children?

Yokoi: No, there was not. Even if I wanted to go, I could not. The children--they all wanted

to go wherever I went, so it was too much trouble. That is what wore me out.

Kanemoto: Then all you children are in the Elk Grove area?

Yokoi: No, no, no. Their school was nearby. I was in Mayhew towards the river.

Kanemoto: Oh Mayhew. They grew up there.

Yokoi: Just a little ways from here, there is a school. All the children, from the eldest daughter graduated from there from the eighth grade and went on to Sacramento High School and then went on from there.

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, Pearl Harbor. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, the children were still small, weren't they? Were they grown up by then?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Were they out of high school?

Yokoi: No, no, no.

Kanemoto: They were still in school?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: What was your impression at that time?

Yokoi: If the children grew up and were able to help, I would be grateful. Even when told not to help they would. We were farmers. We had a fruit ranch. I followed a machine,

my husband followed a machine, and they all helped with everything, and so early on they packed as fast as I did. Because they were girls. Girls certainly came in handy. The eldest girl would beat me if I slacked off.

Kanemoto: Is this the place you leased?

Yokoi: Yes. We build a house in 1948. Then Tom went to Germany during the war. He was in the service for three years. When he was young, he was interned, too. After that, he went to Chicago, and on his eighteenth birthday he was drafted. I think the war was on then. That is why he left.

Kanemoto: Was this after Pearl Harbor? What was your feelings then? What did you think? Japan bombed Hawaii--how did you feel about that? What kind of conversation did you have with your husband? Were you frightened?

Yokoi: Of course. When it comes to war--we were at the other house then. We built this house later. We were so scared. This is a very busy street. In the morning when I counted the cars there were ten and twelve cars all in a row rattling along. This is a very, very busy street. When the grandchild

leaves in the morning to go to work, I always caution him to be careful. He says, "Yes, I will. Bye grandma and he leaves the house. That is the grandchild who lives here. How old is that child?

Kanemoto: Did you have the grandchildren before you went to camp?

Yokoi: No.

Kanemoto: When you received the orders for evacuation, were the children married and did you go to camp together?

Yokoi: My children were not married yet at that time.

Kanemoto: Then no one was married yet?

Yokoi: The oldest one was twenty-two years old. She finished school. She did not go to college. The next child said she would go to college, so Mary went to college and graduated.

Kanemoto: So the next sister?

Yokoi: Papa works so hard to support us, I want to help mother, she said. I felt sorry for her so I told her to go. She said she would go to sewing school. "Mother, let me help you", she said, so I said "Thank you very

much," and let her help at home.

Kanemoto: When you went to camp, were all the children together?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Which camp were you sent to?

Yokoi: When we went to camp, first it was near Fresno, I forgot what the place was called. (Pinedale Assembly Center)

Kanemoto: Assembly Center. Is that right?

Yokoi: Yes. That is where we went. Fresno. Three months. After that, we were sent to Arizona.

Kanemoto: Which camp in Arizona?

Yokoi: Camp two. There were three camps. One, two, three.

Kanemoto: What was the name of the camp?

Yokoi: We went to Camp #2. (Poston, Arizona - Poston Relocation Center Camp #2). At that time, the youngest son was thirteen years old.

Kanemoto: He was still in school, then?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: It was Fred. Is that right? The youngest was Fred.

Yokoi: Yes, it was Fred. Curtis is the child here.

I can't remember much of anything. There are too many.

Kanemoto: That's all right. How was the living condition in camp? Was it hard and bitter? What did you do with your belongings?

Yokoi: We took so much. But the trunks and things. There were many Caucasians who were like brothers to my husband, so they took care of our things.

Kanemoto: Do you remember any of their names? The Caucasian friends.

Yokoi: We don't call them by name directly.

Kanemoto: But you had many Caucasian friends?

Yokoi: Yes. Papa came when he was sixteen years old, but unfortunately he came to a busy place so he went to school only for one month. Males are really great creatures. No matter what, he conversed in English fluently. I wonder why I am so stupid.

Kanemoto: That is because he has been out in the public. Social relationship is a necessity. Mrs. Yokoi, when the war broke out, were you or your husband teased or tormented in any way?

Yokoi: No, no. There was none.

- Kanemoto: There were no incidents of harassment?
- Yokoi: No we were never harassed in any way. Just that this street became so busy. There is a school here. A school for soldiers.
- Kanemoto: Mather? (Mather Air Force Base)
- Yokoi: Mather. There is a school for airplanes. That is why it was so noisy; and there was so much automobile traffic on this street it was very scary.
- Kanemoto: It was rather frightening, wasn't it?
- Yokoi: It was only at that time. After we returned, it is so quiet here now. My daughter says "Mama, are you going to sleep here?" I reply, "Yes, isn't it nice here? So quiet. Sure is nice to be in the country."
- Kanemoto: Okay. So you took all six children to camp in Fresno and all the extra baggage you left it with your friends here. Were they Florin people?
- Yokoi: No. People nearby. Caucasians. In Mayhew.
- Yokoi: She was a piano teacher. (Mrs. M. Fairbairn) Our daughter, Yoshiko, liked piano, and she took piano lessons. The teacher's place. She stored a lot for us.

Their brother's place was nearby. We put some in there, too. So we took only one trunk with us to camp. We took all the suitcases. There were so many. One suitcase was not enough for each child, so we needed many suitcases.

Kanemoto: After you got settled in camp....

Yokoi: We were there for three years.

Kanemoto: You were there for three years. Then you were there until the camp closed?

Yokoi: No. We left before the camp closed.

Kanemoto: Oh, so you left. Okay. What kind of work did you do while in camp, both you and Mr. Yokoi.

Yokoi: There was nothing for me to do. I should have gone to school, but my head is bad so I could not learn. At that time everyone made (tsukuribana) fabricated flowers. Made with cut flowers. There was a lady from Perkins who had been a teacher. I went with her to learn. So I did those things. I didn't learn anything. I should have gone to school. I am so stupid I didn't like going to school. I can't remember anything,

I am so stupid. That is why I tried making flowers. I did help in the kitchen.

Kanemoto: Did you get paid?

Yokoi: Thirteen dollars? Thirteen dollars a month. My husband was a carpenter. He got eighteen dollars. I used that money, too. My thirteen dollars was not enough. Old people all bought yarns to make things, and I wanted to make the same things, so my thirteen dollars was not enough. My husband received eighteen dollars so I borrowed that and used it all up. I didn't bring anything back from camp.

Kanemoto: What did you make in camp?

Yokoi: Sweater.and.....?

Kanemoto: For the children?

Yokoi: For the children and myself, and made it for others and gave it to them. I enjoyed doing those things. That is why I worked hard doing those stupid things. It wasn't a good thing.

Kanemoto: But, for the first time, weren't you taking it easy, so different from farming?

Yokoi: Yes. That was good.

Kanemoto: You could talk with your friends.

Yokoi: Yes, we could do that.

Kanemoto: It was a little different, wasn't it?

Yokoi: Yes, that was good.

Kanemoto: Then, did you do anything else? Something?

Yokoi: No, I just helped in the kitchen preparing food for the sick people.

Kanemoto: Sick people in the hospital?

Yokoi: Our kitchen had lots of food. People from other areas came to our kitchen to eat. I don't know why.

Kanemoto: Maybe you had a good reputation.

Yokoi: Our mess hall was always very busy. Lots of people who didn't have to come came from other areas. That is why we had to work so hard.

Kanemoto: Then all the ladies who had worked hard on the farms had for the first time a life of ease.

Yokoi: Even if we wanted to, we couldn't because we had the children.

Kanemoto: Oh, taking care of the children.

Yokoi: Taking care of the children was a big job. There were six, seven, because one passed away. Those children, one after another for ten years, one after another, and another,

and another. It was very busy.

Kanemoto: The Mrs. Yokoi, did all six children stay in camp for the full three years in camp?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Everyone was together? There was no one who left later?

Yokoi: During camp, there was some who wanted to go to work. At that time Roy said everyone else is going out so he wanted to go with them, and asked if he could. I asked him if he could do the job, and he replied that anyone could do that kind of work. If you want to go, okay, go.

Kanemoto: He left? So Roy left earlier.

Yokoi: He went out for a short time and soon returned. He went to pick fruits or something, and they finished within two months or so.

Kanemoto: Oh. I see. After camp where did you go?

Yokoi: Camp? I went to Fresno, went to Arizona, stayed there in Arizona three years a camp in Arizona. We came back.

Kanemoto: To Sacramento?

Yokoi: We stayed for three years.

Kanemoto: Three years where? Arizona? Then you

returned to Sacramento? To this house?

Yokoi: No, not this house. The other house. It was a Caucasian. At that time there were lots of poor Caucasian. They asked how much they would have to pay to take care of this old house....? This field was planted with strawberries and grapevines. There is the grape so if you take care of the place, and just watch the house, you don't have to pay anything, we said and left.

Kanemoto: And then?

Yokoi: They said, "Okay". They put some money down, but I said "you use your own money, I don't want it". I did not get a penny from them.

Kanemoto: After you returned from camp, was the house in a good condition?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Oh, how lucky.

Yokoi: Caucasians were living in it. Before we returned home, my husband came back a week before. He talked to the FBI and they told him he could return in a week. They said the house would be vacated, and unless they moved out, they would be shot and we would

go after them. That is what they told us. So, with peace of mind, we returned home. It took us three days to come home again.

Kanemoto: And all your furniture that had been stored, did you get them all back? You did not lose anything?

Yokoi: Yes...I guess there is something wrong with my head. I did not remember I had put so many things in the house. There were so many things. Other people said they had lots of things stolen. There was no money, like thirteen dollars. But the small amount put away little by little was used to buy a bed. The bed and everything was there. It was there and we didn't remember. There was a bad Caucasian in the house across the way. He wrote a robber had broken in. That was why we thought all our things had been taken. My husband had said that when we returned home, we would have to buy everything new.

Kanemoto: You were prepared to face that situation?

Yokoi: I always buy lots of totally useless things. If the others get tired of it, I change it, and buy another. Thirteen dollars or

fifteen dollars. I was getting fifteen dollars after I started working there. My husband was a carpenter so he got more. I used all that money too.

Kanemoto: So Mr. Yokoi resumed farming?

Yokoi: Yes. There was a tractor. Someone used the tractor and it was left where we had stored our other things. They used it as long as they could, and when it became unusable, they just left it there. We had the tractor. My husband leveled this whole place and fixed it all up.

Kanemoto: So what was missing?

Yokoi: No, the tools were not missing.

Kanemoto: The household things, your personal things?

Yokoi: They were not taken.

Kanemoto: Some of the farm machinery was taken because they were outside.

Yokoi: They were supposed to be taken care of but you just can't tell. They were good people, they said there was nothing to worry about. I bought lots of canned goods because there were children. They took care of it all. After we went there, there wasn't any so we asked them if they wouldn't send it to us,

and they sent all of it. The Caucasians did.

Kanemoto: To camp?

Yokoi: Yes. This time, I actually did the farming. Until then I could not do it because the children were small. The youngest I took with me was thirteen years old. He was thirteen but still a baby. He was the clumsiest of them all. Even though he had a place to sleep, he did not sleep there, he would squeeze in between my husband and me. We said "This is not your place, go sleep over there," but he would squeeze in anyway.

Kanemoto: It is good that you did not lose too much, according to other people's story.

Yokoi: No, they did not take too much.

Kanemoto: After you returned, did you feel any discrimination or harassment?

Yokoi: No, I did not. Is that because I am stupid? Other people said they were afraid. I did not do anything wrong so I was not afraid.

Kanemoto: Okay.

Yokoi: Just going to church is number one. The place I like is church. My husband is church.

Kanemoto: Did you go to church in camp, too?

Yokoi: Yes. I never skipped church, not even once.

Kanemoto: Was the (bokushi-san), Reverend and hotoke-san, the same in camp?

Yokoi: He was a reverend who had been in Stockton. Sensei was different. Reverend Sasaki from the Sacramento church was sent elsewhere. After we returned, Reverend Sasaki was our reverend again. He came and conducted services. He used to talk a lot. He also used to come to our house a lot. He used to tell us a lot. But Reverend Sasaki passed away early. But his son, Senyu, is here. He is also a reverend. He is around San Jose or someplace around there. He is Reverend Sasaki's son. I did not go to other places, I went to church. When I went, Reverend Sasaki and Mrs. Sasaki were very kind to me.

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, after living in America all your life, and getting sent to camp, how do you feel? Do you dislike the American government for putting you through such hardships?

Yokoi: No. I am stupid so I do not think of anything so difficult. It does not good to think about it anyway.

Kanemoto: But when you were getting thirteen dollars, it was so little, what did you think about it?

Yokoi: Miserable. At that time we could not take any large amount in, that was the order in Sacramento. We did take some in secretly since we had six children.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2, YOKOI

Kanemoto: After camp, each one got married, grew up and...

Yokoi: They all grew up and left the home. But the boys, they all said everyone is going to Chicago so I want to go to Chicago, too. Me, too. Me, too. The oldest daughter stayed with the mother. The next daughter, Mary, she was on the sharp side, she liked school and did very well in school. She went to college for two years. She did not go the third and fourth year. For the two years, she lived in Sacramento and attended for two years. The older daughter said the father and mother had lots of hardships, and

she was very sorry, and she wanted to help her mother. I asked her what she intended to do. She said she went to school and learned, and with what she had learned she wanted to study sewing. That was good, I said. The third daughter, Yoneko, said there is nothing to be accomplished by staying here, I want to go to school in Los Angeles. I said that might be a good idea, too, and let her go.

Kanemoto: Yoshiko-san?

Yokoi: No, no Yoshiko. Yoshiko stayed here. Meriko stayed here, too. Yoneko went to sewing school in Los Angeles.

Kanemoto: Okay. Now you have grandchildren.

Yokoi: Yes, we have lots of them. I can't remember all their names.

Kanemoto: Eighteen of them?

Yokoi: Yes, eighteen. I don't remember the names. I look at the child and wonder what the name was, and I cannot recall. It just doesn't come back.

Kanemoto: Did all the children obediently accept the Japanese culture? Were they well mannered to your satisfaction?

- Yokoi: (Chuckles) I can't say anything. They are my grandchildren so I cannot say anything, either good or bad.
- Kanemoto: (Big chuckles) That is very wise. (More chuckles)
- Yokoi: Even if I say anything, it won't matter, it is too late. My children, because they are my children, I can say. But this child, I won't say anything. No complaint.
- Kanemoto: Then the third generation grandchildren, do they know about the camp experience in detail?
- Yokoi: Who?
- Kanemoto: The grandchildren.
- Yokoi: No, they do not. The older one, about fifteen, I don't think they know very much.
- Kanemoto: That is the reason why the schools are going to teach the students that America treated only the Japanese Americans in this way. It will be included in their curriculum. What they did not like, they kept it secret and did not mention it. That is not good. But because this is America, they apologized for the bad treatment. The money we received recently from President Bush, pardon us,

America was wrong, was an admission of guilt. Just like that, the children, the third generation, the fourth generation, the fifth generation, in order, will learn about the experience that took place. It will also remain in history. We are very grateful. Because this is America they were able to apologize and pay us reparation.

Yokoi: Yes, I received it three weeks ago. I received it early, it came on Monday at 9:00 am or shortly thereafter.

Kanemoto: That is very good.

Yokoi: There is someone from the Delta, he was in Japan. He returned two or three days ago. "Did you get yours?" "Yes, I received mine, too." "How about you?" "I was one of the first ones to receive it." The older people got it first. I am ninety years old, one of the older people.

Kanemoto: Ultimately, your generation did face many hardships. Isn't that so?

Yokoi: I don't know if we did or not. I am so dumb. I always felt I was so insignificant. I never thought there was anyone worse than me. I always felt I was stupid.

Kanemoto: Please do something that will bring happiness and joy to yourself. Because you are so healthy.....

Yokoi: Thank you very much. I am very healthy now. I attend church with everyone.....At the church, we are the oldest ones. Among all the people in Sacramento, it is surprising that there are so many who do not attend. I mentioned to the one sitting next to me, this row of people is the same as the one in the old church. The same three rows. I always sit in the same place, I always tell my friends. If you go far away, there is no church. I think three or four months I was away.

Kanemoto: To Los Angeles?

Yokoi: Yes, to Los Angeles. It was towards the east, near Los Angeles.....I have been there many times. At the present time, they have gone far away. To the desert (Desert Hot Springs near Palm Springs) My son went on vacation. How do you say it, the one that howls like a dog. Like a dog but bigger. When asked if he heard the howling, he said he had not. I told him I

had never heard it either. How do you say that?

Kanemoto: A scary one?

Yokoi: Yes. Very. If you saw it, you would be frightened.

Kanemoto: For safety?

Yokoi: Yes. But there are many dogs around.

Kanemoto: That's right. They are here?

Yokoi: Right now there are none. He took them to work with him.

Kanemoto: Oh? What kind of work does he do?

Yokoi: After returning from the service, the second son was told there was a place for sale in town. A place where you fix cars and things.

Kanemoto: A garage?

Yokoi: Mechanic. Papa and mama said we can't let him just play around since he came back from the service. Tom was in the service for three years.

Kanemoto: Okay so in your household, only Tom went into Service?

Yokoi: No. The one below him, Fred went, too.

Kanemoto: Fred went into the service too?

Yokoi: Two of them went. The older brother

received a letter. At that time, men who were married did not have to go. So he sent them a letter of notification of his material status.

Kanemoto: He did not have to go?

Yokoi: No. Tom and Fred went.

Kanemoto: Army? Air Force?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Army? Both of them?

Yokoi: Yes. They went.

Kanemoto: Then they did their duty to their country. Right?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: Excellent.

Yokoi: The older one went two years, and then another year. He said he wanted to go, so he served three years. He went to Germany. Tom did. The younger one served one-and-a-half year or two years. He went to Korea.

Kanemoto: Then he could tell you some good stories. Mrs. Yokoi, how many times have you been back to Japan?

Yokoi: Twice. Just twice. The children were small, and you can't take the small ones.

Kanemoto: Do you have the energy to go again?

Yokoi: Yes.

Kanemoto: You do?

Yokoi: I am thinking of going again.....has returned. That child was gone for three weeks. I went for one week. Three weeks is too long. Too old, so you don't know when you may become ill. Then too, people will go to a lot of trouble so one week only. What will you do for money, they ask. I received some money. At that time my older brother did not have to give me any money. This \$20,000, what shall I do with it?", I said to my son. He said, "Mama don't worry about it. I will put it in the bank for you." He put it in the bank over there. I am in Sacramento. That child is in Walnut Grove. He may have put it in there. My husband had a bank here, my bank is here now at Roy's bank. Roy deposited my \$20,000 in.

Kanemoto: Then, Mrs. Yokoi, use that money to enjoy yourself.

Yokoi: Yes. I don't need that money. I am grateful I received it. I accepted it thankfully, but I don't have to have it. I have my own money. I have enough so this

money is extra. So I told Roy you take it to your place. I'm sure he put it in the bank but I do not know which bank. I don't know where he put it. I really don't care. He said he would give it to me anytime. I said I don't have to get it back. If I need it, I will ask for it. Even this ranch. With all the children, I did not work outside very much.....

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, this home, is this your home?

Yokoi: This is Roy's house. No, not Roy. Tom's house. The other one over there is, but it is rented out.

Kanemoto: Oh you have it rented.

Yokoi: People have rented it.

Kanemoto: Oh, that's good.

Yokoi: We built that house in 1935. My husband built that house. I am very impressed that he knew enough to be able to build a house like that. I pray to him every day.

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, please have a long life.

Yokoi: Thank you.

Kanemoto: Mrs. Yokoi, please stay healthy. We shall now end this session. This is the end of the oral history of Mrs. Mats^uye Yokoi.